**Secondary Schools United Nations Symposium 2016**

**Committee**: The Commission on the Status of Women

**Country**: Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Nepal is a small country located in Southeast Asia that has undergone many political and governmental changes within the recent years. Gender equality and women empowerment has been a rising issue that Nepal has begun to focus on. The government has taken many positive steps towards helping women in sustainability, lessening gender-based violence, and helping girls get their education. However, recent political troubles have made it difficult for the country to tackle these issues. After a nearly 10 year long civil war between Maoist rebels and the government ended in 2006, the country went through many Constituent Assemblies and had several elections. A constitution was finally drafted and put in place during September 2015 but all of this political unrest means that women’s rights has not been high on Nepal’s list of priorities.

**Topic 1: Women and Sustainability**

Getting women more involved with sustainability and the environment is a growing concern of the government. As many men are migrating out of rural areas, the responsibility of working in agriculture is falling onto women. However, Nepal recognizes that although more women work in agriculture and for the environment, women only manage a small percentage. For example, the country’s forestry groups have a significant amount of female members, but women run only 5%. In Nepal, women are not able to have autonomous power over land and agriculture. However, Nepal recognizes the importance of the participation of women in the decision-making processes about the environment since much of their livelihoods depend on it. Thus, several policies and actions have been put into place to solve this. The national policies for agriculture (2004) focuses on promoting equal numbers of men and women in farmers’ committees. The national policies for irrigation (2003) and forestry (2000) have great emphasis on women holding positions on executive committees. Irrigation decrees that water use associations have 33% of their members be women. During this committee, Nepal would like to see resolutions drafted to allow women more control over their land and to mandate a higher percentage of women involvement in executive committees.

**Topic 2: Elimination of Gender-Based Violence**

The elimination of gender-based violence has been a problem that Nepal has continuously struggled with. With the majority of the population following the Hindu caste system, Nepal has a very patriarchal society. The number of cases of rape and spousal abuse has been growing in recent years despite the country’s efforts to mitigate the issue. Much of the issue lies within people’s beliefs- a survey done by the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2006 found that nearly a fifth of both men and women thought that there were times where wife beating was acceptable. Nepal would like this committee to create solutions where more information is given to the population about the psychological and physical effects of abuse. Several policies have been put into place to eliminate this violence. Child marriage has been banned by the government since 1963 (but because of tradition it is still prevalent in today’s society). The government also works closely with the United Nations to solve these issues. The Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act became law in 2009. The United Nations’ Children’s Fund (UNICEF) endures committees made up of women that deal with issues like child marriage and sexual violence in 23 villages across the country. Nepal recognizes that it needs more groups and stricter laws to stop these things from happening and would like to see this committee discuss ways to implement these.

**Topic 3:Women in Education and Employment**

Equal access to education has improved greatly within recent years in Nepal. The country recognizes the importance of education for both men and women and how it can help reduce poverty in the country. The country has seen a sharp rise in girls attending pre primary and primary schools. The number of girls attending secondary school is also rising but many females are impaired from attending by their rural location and because of domestic responsibility. Also, since the country follows a caste system, those in the lowers castes have less access to education. The country has several policies to help fix these issues, such as the Education for All Program (2004-2009), which helped disadvantaged groups such as women and ethnic minorities have easier access to education. Another issue the country faces is lack of teachers who are able to teach women and in rural areas. There is also a shortage of qualified teachers in the country. In this committee, Nepal would like to discuss strategies to bring higher education to more rural areas. It would also like to discuss ways to attract teachers to rural jobs and jobs that teach lower castes. It would also like to draft solutions for promoting jobs in education so that more people pursue that field. Employment rates for women have also greatly increased in the recent years. Women have become more involved in the agriculture sector and other sectors such as service. Much of this is due to the government’s focus on making sure Nepali women know their work is recognized. However this presents other problems, such as increased sexual harassment towards women in the workplace. Nepal would like to discuss with the committee possible solutions to this so that women feel safe in their work environments. Overall, Nepal hopes this committee will lead to greater overall empowerment of its women.

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